

North Lanarkshire Children's
Services Partnership

Children's Services

Plan 2023-2026

Annual Report 2025-2026



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North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26 Annual Report 2025-2026

North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership, August 2026

Summary

This report includes the key achievements and progress made during the third and final year of our North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26 (CS Plan) and information about preparations for the Children's Services Plan 2026-29.

Complementing the CS Plan and this report is

- North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2023-26
- Strategic Drivers and Plans document
- Annual Report, 2023-24
- Annual Report, 2025-26
- North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Overview 2026

All can be accessed here-[Children's Services Plan | North Lanarkshire Council](#)

You can hear about the Children's Services Partnership and what it does in short films co-produced with young people:
[North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership | North Lanarkshire Council](#)

Alternative formats of this report, further information, more detailed reporting and contact details for the staff leading on the broad range of work to achieve the Children's Services Partnership priorities is available on request.

Our Vision

In North Lanarkshire, our vision is to support all children and young people to achieve their potential, ensuring they are loved, nurtured and empowered to thrive in all aspects of their lives, upholding each and every child and young person's rights as stated in the UNCRC.

We will work collaboratively with children, young people, their families, and our partners to ensure they get the best start in life, and support families to provide loving care. We will do this by making sure we have the right support available, at the right time, for as long as needed, and delivered in the right places to ensure equity for all and reduce inequalities.

Planning and reporting

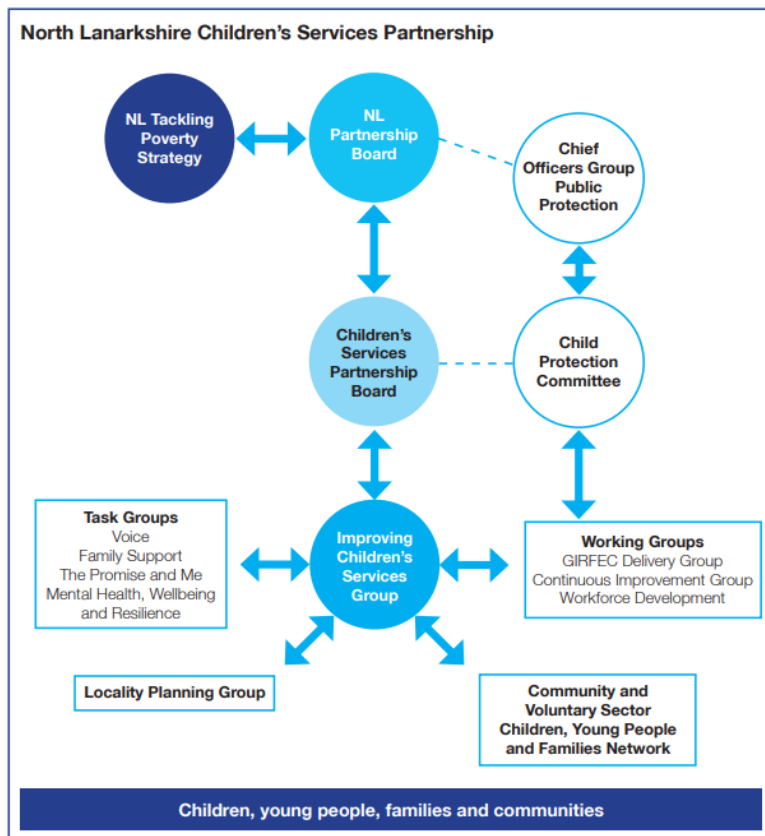
Scottish Government legislation requires us to publish a Children's Services Plan every 3 years and to publish a report on progress each year.

This report is for the period of time that there was emphasis on what we have done, what difference did this make and what are our priorities for the next 3 years. Since September 2025 we have been working with partners, including children, young people, and families, to identify, inform, and shape the shared priorities and agreed actions for the North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2026-2029.

Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the process of gathering information, research, data and feedback to inform continuous improvement, target resources and identify shared priorities.

Governance

A broad range of agencies and organisations come together as North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership to co-ordinate services and supports and work to achieve shared priorities. This is to ensure the best outcomes for children, young people, and families and the best use of the resources available.



The Children's Services Partnership Board (CSPB) reports to the North Lanarkshire Partnership Board and provides strategic direction.

The Improving Children's Services Group (ICSG) delivers and reports on the range of plans and actions taken forward through the task groups and linked networks.

Links with North Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) include shared areas of responsibility: Continuous improvement and workforce development.

At a local and operational level, partnership staff come together to plan and deliver on priorities in Locality Planning Groups in Task groups. These are:

- Voice and UNCRC
- Whole Family Support
- The Promise and Me Partnership
- Mental Health Wellbeing and Resilience
- Getting it right for every child Delivery Group
- Continuous Improvement Group

Involvement of children, young people and families in the work that we do influences the priorities and decisions made. There are examples of this across our workstreams which informs and influences developments and decisions.

Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS), Children, Young People and Families Network (CYPFN) is facilitated by Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire to strengthen the representation and delivery role of the sector. The network reaches the diverse roles, interests and knowledge across the sector.

Key drivers

Key drivers for CS Partnership are:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Getting it right for every child
- The Promise
- Whole Family Support
- Tackling Poverty and Child Poverty
- Child Protection

Early intervention and prevention is central to all of the drivers above and is at the heart of the planning and delivery of children's services to meet the diversity of needs of all children and young people.

There are close links to North Lanarkshire Tackling Poverty Strategy, Towards a Fairer North Lanarkshire, and the Local Child Poverty Action Plan and Report (LCPAR). All groups consider how work will impact on the four key drivers of tackling poverty:

- Income from employment
- Reducing the cost of living
- Income from social security and benefits in kind
- Holistic support

Achievements 2025-2026

The following pages provide a brief summary of the key achievements of each of the task groups followed by some additional highlights from across the partnership.

Voice: UNCRC and Voice Task Group

Priorities 2023-2026

1. Everybody, (staff, partners, and the public), is aware of these rights and understands what they are, as expressed in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
2. We embed a rights-based approach across all services and make children's rights visible in policy, culture and practice.
3. Through engagement and participation, we want to know and understand the collective views, needs and aspirations of children, young people, parents and families.
4. We use a range of methods and collaborate with other services to engage with children, young people and families.
5. Task groups and working groups plan for engagement and create opportunities to ensure participation in planning of delivery of the priorities and the co design of services.
6. We engage with children, young people and their families on what is working for them and what improvements to services they think are needed.
7. We want the voices of children, young people, parents and families to be at the centre of the CS Partnership and ensure those with protected characteristics and intersectionality have the same opportunities to have their voices heard.
8. We want to support the participation of individual children, young people and families that we are working with to gather their views, tell us their interests and needs and ensure these are represented and acted upon.
 - Each Child's Plan will include all relevant views and how they will be implemented and reviewed.
 - We will develop and apply a range of tools and resources and ensure inclusion of diverse communication needs.

Key achievements 2025-2026

- In 2025 the third phase of #MakeltRight began. This is to develop podcasts to focus on where children's rights are at risk in North Lanarkshire to amplify the experiences and circumstances when children, young people and families are furthest from their rights.
- UNCRC learning opportunities, resources, staff briefings and information have been shared across the CS Partnership.
- In April 2025 awards for Rights Respecting Schools were: Gold 23, Silver 29, Bronze 57, Registered 19.
- Following the first Youth Voice Conference in November 2024 there was ongoing engagement with task groups and chairs on the North Lanarkshire Youth Council recommendations from the conference. A report on the actions taken by all task groups and NLYC will be submitted to the CS Partnership prior to the second Youth Voice Conference scheduled for June 2026.
- North Lanarkshire Youth Council members were involved in mental health and wellbeing funding applications.
- Peer mentors were employed within Community Learning and Development and Social Work and are gathering lived experience and engagement opportunities.
- Further development of a PADLET with information, examples and good practice in engagement and participation. [The Voice and UNCRC Task Group Bulletin board \(padlet.com\)](#)

Family: Whole Family Support and Mental Health, Wellbeing and Resilience Task Groups

Priorities 2023-26

9. Use the community hub programme in all localities as a key enabler of earlier intervention, moving and integrating services upstream to improve outcomes, through preventative approaches.
10. Ensure equity of access to services for all children, young people and families including care experienced people up to and beyond the age of 26yrs.
11. Strengthen family supports where children have additional support needs, including those with a Neurodevelopmental profile.

12. Build and develop the mental health and resilience of our children, young people and their families promoting early intervention, establishing community supports, and self-care.
13. Tackle the impacts of poverty to support children, young people and their families to thrive and gain access to economic opportunities.
14. North Lanarkshire Council are working towards achieving the Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland Local Authority award and aim to support, promote and protect breastfeeding in our communities for an increased amount of women to initiate and sustain breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks.
15. Children and families affected by alcohol and drug use will be safe, healthy, included and supported.

Key Achievements 2025-26

Whole Family Support

- Achievement of the Breastfeeding Friendly Gold Award.
- Evidence demonstrates increased community access to a wide range of multi agency, preventative supports, with community hubs successfully enabling coordinated, co located provision.
- Our Early Help family support service, Families Here and Now (FHANS) was launched. The service receives on average 150-200 referrals per quarter. Immediate needs are addressed and families are supported to access the right help, even where FHANS is not the most appropriate service.
- Targeted additional level family support is delivering measurable impact, with over 75% return to school success through Family Engagement Support Assistants and over 70% improved outcomes following intervention by Early Years Family Engagement Practitioners (FEP), who are also preventing escalation in most cases.
- The Neurodevelopmental Family Support Service is achieving positive outcomes for families, evidenced by sustained high demand and engagement.
- A cash first approach has been successfully embedded across tackling poverty and family support services. This reduces immediate financial pressure and links people to income maximisation and money advice.
- Young people and families are achieving improved outcomes through access to a range of alcohol and drug family supports. These are shaped by lived experience and identified need. Evaluation shows strengthened family resilience and recovery.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Prevention is at the heart of all services offered. Almost two thirds of all referrals were self-referrals, reflecting choice and awareness of the pathways on offer.
- Less than 1% of Community Health and Wellbeing referrals were escalated to CAMHS or social work (in 25/26 this is from a total of 3000 CYP). This tells us that the level of need is being escalated as required to the right support available.
- 1000 young people (up by 22% since 2025) engaged with the Kooth digital platform and encouragingly, 87% of those who gave feedback saying they would recommend it to a friend.
- Community Learning and Development offer Living Life to the Full (LLTF) groups in every locality to help young people build resilience, improve their mental health and develop coping skills. In 2025/26, 83% of young people taking part in LLTF reported an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing. (rising to 93% from “at risk” groups”).
- The Exchange Counselling service was commissioned in 2023 in response to a gap in support for care experienced young people. This is part of the holistic support delivered from the 'Aftercare Hub'.
- We developed the Lanarkshire Mental Health and Resources Directory with young people to provide ways to help and improve well-being. Use of the website has increased each year.
- 7,320 children and young people, and 501 families, have been supported via the Children, Young People and Families Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, with investment of £874k into the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Care -The Promise and me Partnership

Priorities 2023-26

16. Develop a systemic approach to involve care experienced children, young people and their families in how all services are designed and/or re-designed to meet all health needs.
17. Provide support to parents that is available when they are ready and tailored to their needs.
18. In our balance of care, reduce the trend of children and young people being removed from and rehabilitated to their families by strengthening opportunities to provide early help and prevent escalation.

19. Support to parents whose children have been removed on a permanent basis helps to sustain or build relationships with their children and maintain direct or indirect contact.
20. Build on the work already progressed to continue to develop our approaches to sustain nurturing relationships for our care experienced children and young people- family relationships with parents, carers and those significant to children and young people.
21. Consider the support that could be provided to unaccompanied asylum seekers and children and young people who are in North Lanarkshire through the National Transfer Scheme.
22. Continue to close the educational attainment gap for our care experienced children and young people. Continue to improve their attendance and provide help to parents and carers to support their children and young people to meet their educational needs.
23. Further development of the Virtual School, building on its success in improving children and young people's attendance and educational attainment and support to enable them to have positive destinations.
24. Care experienced children, young people and their families are involved in the development and redesign of health services.
25. There is a smoother transition from children to adult health services for those who need ongoing support.
26. Use additional funding streams proportionately to develop community supports and therapeutic interventions to enable tailored responses to meet individual needs.

Key Achievements 2025-26

- Better and consistent health support for young people leaving care.
- Developing opportunities for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Fewer children being excluded from school.
- Holiday activities for kinship families, children experiencing care at home and those involved in child protection.
- When it is safe, improve how care experienced away from home children remain connected or support to re-connect with family and people important to them.
- Getting alongside care experienced parents, to improve support for them.
- Using digital platforms to improve how we raise awareness of becoming a foster carer or supported carer.
- Better support for carers, kinship, adoptive and foster carers, including specialist therapies.
- New, child friendly information about corporate parenting.
- Employment of a Promise Lead Officer in NHSL and a Through Care and Aftercare Nurse.

People: GIRFEC Delivery Group and Improving Children's Services Group

Priorities 2023-26

26. Continue to advance and develop our children's services workforce. We will provide opportunities for career advancement and promote collaborative working across the children's services partnership and adult services.
27. Continue to develop workforce skills, confidence and competence developed in Getting it right for every child methodology, pathways, assessment planning and interventions.
28. Continually evaluate and update training and learning in line with legislation, strategy and policy
29. Make sure that staff supporting kinship, foster and adoptive families provide additional support when they need it, recognising that they too may need early help and preventative support to feel confident in caring for their children and young people who have experienced trauma.
30. Provide early help and preventative support to all families who need it and when they need it, including those parenting teenagers.
31. Consult with communities to identify gaps in service provision, how and where they want to access services, what is working well and what they think needs to change.
32. Work collaboratively across the range of strategic partnerships.
33. Work within our strategic frameworks to promote wellbeing within and across our communities ensuring equity of opportunities to improve life choices and chances.
34. Communicate effectively with our children, young people, families and communities.
35. Further develop our use of technology for families and the wider community to access and engage with services.

Key Achievements 2025-26

- Development and embedding of Pathways for Planning and Support to ensure children and young people get the right help at the right time.
- Signs of Safety practice framework implemented and being rolled out which has strengthened working in partnership with families and including the voice of parents.

- Alliance GIRFEC training delivered to a wide range of staff over the last year including 6 multi agency practice face to face sessions.
- Review, development and launch of GIRFEC training and learning.
 - Understanding GIRFEC Module
 - Assessment and planning e learning
 - Updated seven-minute briefing developed and cascaded to staff
- Review, including consultation with children, young people, parents, carers and staff, and further development of GIRFEC in NL Website as a communications and resources platform for staff, parents and young people.
- As part of the review of Family Support, consultations with young people and families are being held around support needs and services. Family support services have been delivered around school clusters, early years and through partners services that plan interventions with the families they work with and work in a collaborative way alongside families.
- Communication materials with a QR code to the GIRFEC website are now available and have been widely distributed e.g. community venues and events, to families via frontline staff.
- Additional funding from Scottish Government has been managed as a partnership and there have been opportunities for young people and families to influence how funding is spent.
- In our reports it is clear that the views of children, young people and families are part of our planning and decision making.

Scaffolding: Continuous Improvement Group and Improving Children's Services Group

Priorities 2023-26

36. Our vision is shared across the partnership, and each partner is actively participating in the leadership and delivery of our shared priorities.
37. Further the implementation of Getting It Right for Every Child and Pathways for all children and young people.
38. Implement changes in legislation and national guidance.
39. The CS Partnership is aligned with and contributing to North Lanarkshire Tackling Poverty strategy and actions.
40. Through information and research, we are aware of need, changing drivers, policy and connections.
41. We are aware of the impact of our work and we are continuing to improve wellbeing for children, young people and families.
42. The knowledge gained is integrated into our planning and reporting.

Key Achievements 2025-26

- As part of the Quality Improvement and Performance Framework, we have a multi-agency Improvement Calendar. This helps us recognise what is working well and areas of improvement.
- Improvement activity resulted in the implementation of Signs of Safety as the assessment and planning framework across children's services.
- Record reading is an important part of our quality assurance and self-evaluation activities. This includes continuous audit active for Initial Referral Decisions (IRD) for child protection and Child Protection Notification of Concern (NOC)
- To help us understand our practice, we carry out thematic audit and self-evaluation, and this has included
 - Safe & Together impact audit
 - Contextual Safeguarding
 - Children who are Care Experienced at Home
- As well as record reading self-evaluation also includes meeting with children and their families as well as the team supporting them. We also use surveys to get more information from children, families and the workforce.
- We regularly analyse the Minimum Data Set for child protection; this helps us to identify trends.
- The CIG has made sure we are implementing important programmes of work to improve the experiences of our children and their families, this includes Signs of Safety and Healing, Safe and Together, Contextual Safeguarding.
- Partners including South Lanarkshire Council, Police Scotland, NHS Lanarkshire, children and young people have been involved planning a Bairns' Hoose. This will offer holistic, child-centred support to those who have been victims or witness of abuse and to children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused harm.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2026

Each time we do a new Children's Services Plan we stop to think about what we have learned during the three years of the Plan that is coming to an end. From September 2025 – March 26 we gathered information, discussed and analysed this in task groups and working groups to inform the priorities for the Children's Services Plan 2026-29. The information included:

- Six monthly reports from task groups that update and evidence progress on priorities.
- Annual Reports for the 2023-26 planning cycle.
- Learning about what has improved for children, young people and families and what needs to improve further.
- Evidence collected through research, statistics and evaluation about what is working well.
- What children, young people and families have told us about their experiences and what is important to them.
- Reports from self-assessment and inspection.

Things such as changes in legislation, the cost-of-living crisis, even war in other countries result in changes that we may need to respond to.

We plan the work, do the work, study what has happened and take action in a continual cycle. There are many cycles going on at any one time and throughout the planning cycle.



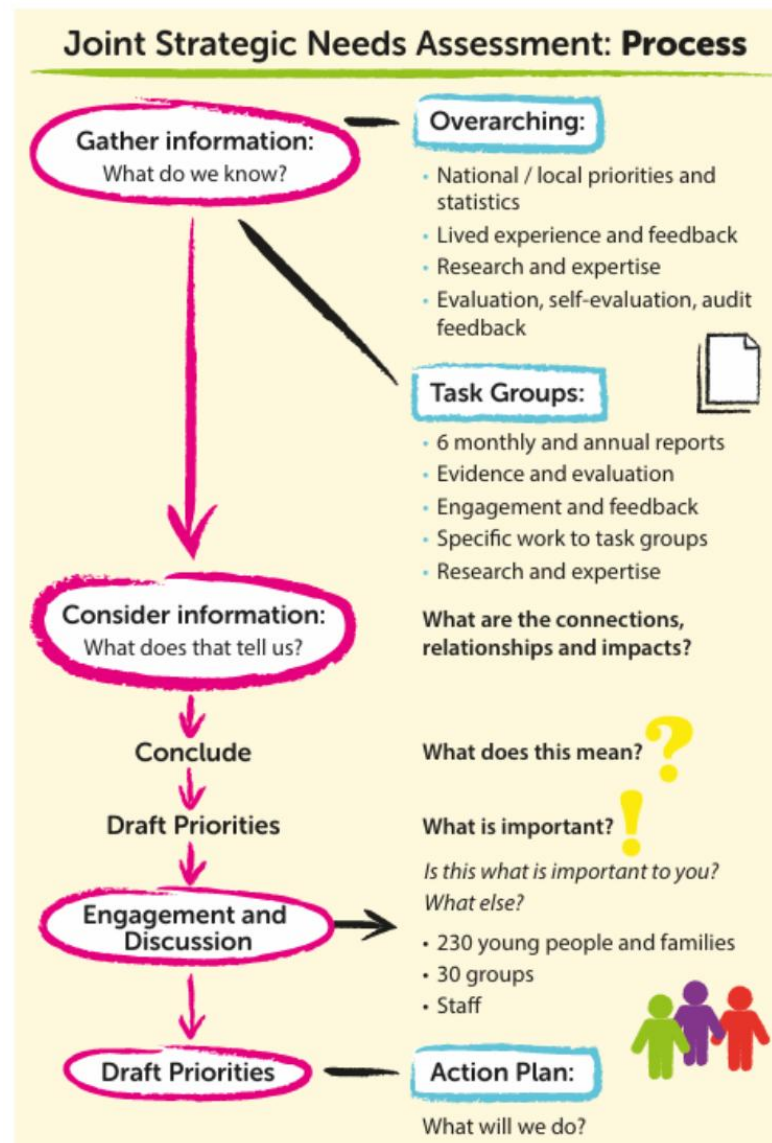
To identify the priorities for the Children's Services Plan 2026-29 we brought together the information listed above- what we know, what people have told us and what has changed.

We drafted priorities based on our learning and we asked children, young people and families for their views on these priorities.

Over 230 people from 30 groups and organisations took the time to consider what we all want for children, young people and families, discussed our vision and the draft priorities for this Plan. Their comments were shared and discussed in the task groups.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process is illustrated in this diagram and a link to the full JSNA can be found [here](#).

The pages that follow list the new priorities for the Children's Services Plan 2026-29.



New Priorities 2026-29

Voice and UNCRC

1. Make sure everyone knows about children's rights.
2. Make children's rights part of everything we do as partners in our rules, how we work with children and in the way we support children.
3. Find out about and listen to children whose rights are at risk.
4. Support children, young people and families to join in, share their ideas, help design how services should work and influence decisions.
5. Help staff and organisations to make it possible for children, young people and families to get involved.

Whole Family Support

6. Use community spaces and the community hub programme to promote earlier intervention and ensure families get the right support at the right time.
7. Strengthen and develop preventative approaches to meet need and improve the experiences and outcomes of children and their families.
8. Tackle the impacts of poverty to support CYP and their families to thrive and gain access to economic opportunities.
9. Maintain progress in improving rates of breastfeeding through our approach to whole family support.
10. Children and families affected by alcohol and drug use will have the opportunity to access a range of supports that meet their specific needs.
11. Strengthen family supports where children have additional support needs, including pre & post diagnostic supports for those with Neurodevelopmental profile.

12. Build and develop the mental health and resilience of our CYP and their families promoting early intervention, establishing community supports, and self-care which is informed by the voice of CYP.
13. Healthy Digital use: better understand and address harms from social media.

Care- The Promise and me Partnership

14. Safety and Relationships: If children need to move from their family, make sure brothers and sisters can stay connected and children stay connected to those who are important to them, when it is safe for everyone.
15. Listening to children and help them speak up through advocacy and involve them in shaping the services that affect them.
16. Supporting Families: Provide families with early support when worries begin, working together to keep children safe at home.
17. Education and Opportunities: Provide education and other opportunities by helping children do well at school. Make sure they have choices like college, jobs or apprenticeships, and support them with mentors and positive role models.
18. Health and Wellbeing Strengthen health and wellbeing by making it easier for children to get the support they need to keep them healthy including their mental health.
19. Health and Wellbeing: Strengthen health and wellbeing by making it easier for children to get the support they need to keep them healthy including their mental health.
20. Growing Up and Moving On: Make sure there is early planning for children as they grow up and get ready to leave care. Make it easy to access support up to the age of 26, when needed, including help with housing, money, work and their wellbeing.

People

21. Ensure all partners have a shared understanding of the principles and core components of GIRFEC.
22. Ensure consistency in application of the national practice model across partners to work better together.
23. Ensure that children, young people and families have a good understanding of what GIRFEC means for them and involve young people in a meaningful way to inform future developments.

- 24. Maintain clear communication platforms to support understanding of children's services, the GIRFEC approach, and how to access support.
- 25. All partners are working to be trauma informed organisations and for staff to work in a trauma informed way.
- 26. Further develop pathways for children and their families to support multi-agency working.
- 27. Continue to strengthen working in partnership with families and improve the quality of child/young person's plans.
- 28. We will continue to develop workforce competence and skills through multi agency learning and training, responding to changes in legislation and policy.
- 29. Include the voice of children, young people and families in our planning and seek their views and experiences when we report on what we have done.

Scaffolding – Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) and Improving Children's Services Group

- 30. The CIG will support continued self-evaluation activities including quality assurance and analysis of performance information.
- 31. Further improvements in data recording and analysis across children's services.
- 32. We work together to make best use of available resources and seek additional resource to achieve our priorities.
- 33. Provide consistent and holistic support, which enables children to have their voice heard, access specialist services and recover from their experiences.
- 34. We will respond to the demands of changing priorities, because of new legislation, national policy and our own improvement activity.
- 35. Our vision and priorities are shared and understood, and partners are active in the leadership of NL Children's Services Partnership and in the delivery of our Plan. (ICSG)
- 36. We work closely with other strategies and plans to further National Outcomes and achieve the ambitions of The Plan for NL.

North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 2026-29

The priorities above are the starting point for our Action Plan for the 2026-29 planning cycle. Task groups have worked through each priority to identify actions and measures of how we will know we are making progress. Six monthly reports will go to the Children's Services Partnership Board and annual reports will be published to update progress and outline significant changes.

For further information about the content of this report or to receive this report in alternative languages please contact:

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